

Mailbag

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Congratulations

As a recently naturalized Swiss living abroad, I would like to thank you for the "Swiss Review", which is one of my most important links to Switzerland. Congratulations, particularly, on the layout of your December issue. The colors on the cover and the picture of the Christmas market in front of the Einsiedeln monastery made for a really well-illustrated and dynamic magazine.

FACUNDO M. SIMES LANFRANCHI,
CÓRDOBA, ARGENTINA

Step-by-step

It was very refreshing to read your objective editorial in the December issue and then the beautiful picture of the Christmas Market with the Einsiedeln Monastery in the background. In summation the whole issue was perfect until I got to the Hanspeter Kriesi contribution. This is exactly the known attitude of the academic ivory tower elite. They know everything and we out here living in the Wilderness are considered morons, numb-skulls and nitwits. Believe me, direct democracy will remain for a long time and I will keep voting from San Diego on every referendum! Keep up the good work in the rest of the "Swiss Review"!

MAX WIRTH, SAN DIEGO, USA

Planting GM crops

Many thanks for your report in the December "Swiss Review" on the people's referendum of 27 November 2005 concerning the moratorium on planting GM crops. Living at this distance from Switzerland and at some remove from internal media coverage of the issues at stake, and after voting on the questions, I am really grateful to have such detailed follow-up coverage on the outcome.



Here in Vermont we've been struggling for some time now to get a moratorium on the planting of GM crops passed (without success), a seed labeling law passed (with success but without

subsequent enforcement) and a bill passed which would protect farmers from lawsuits by GM seed manufacturers (still in the legislature).

We have already experienced the contamination of organic crops by GM genes, and we know that there are increasingly reports surfacing about the health risks of eating GM foods, and yet our efforts to awaken people to these circumstances are frequently frustrated. So it was very gratifying to be part of a vote that had such a positive and hope-filled outcome.

SYLVIA DAVATZ, HARTLAND,
VERMONT, USA

The Rebirth of Swiss Football

I would like to congratulate Heinz Eckert for his editorial and his double-page feature on "Köbi Kuhn". I am also tempted to point out that the Union Sportive Suisse de Paris (USSP) – founded in 1910 – has not waited to be prompted by the Swiss Football Association (SFV) to seek out talented young players... The most famous Swiss USSP member to play at international level was Aaron Pollitz, who clocked up 23 caps; he played in the Uruguay – Switzerland (3 – 0) final at the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris. Let's hope Köbi Kuhn's young and dynamic "bunch of friends" will thrill us with their performances at the World Cup in Germany, as they did recently in Berne. Hopp Schwiiz!

MARTIN STREBEL, CHAIRMAN OF
THE USSP, LA VARENNE
ST-HILAIRE, FRANCE

Swiss blues flying high

High-altitude blues. If you were to ask for two high-flying Swiss bluesmen, then Napoleon Washington from La Chaux-de-Fonds and Hank Shizzoe from Berne would definitely come out on top. Both are guitar virtuosos blessed with deep voices and a special feel for out-of-the-ordinary melodies. They are representatives of a vibrant, contemporary blues style of a quality that ranks alongside that of the true greats of this genre on the other side of the Atlantic. Napoleon Washington recently brought out his second album "Homegrown", which he recorded in New York. He has been playing the guitar since he was twelve, and his life to date has been pretty adventurous. He was engaged for tours in America (1991, 92 and 95) by New Yorkers Gary Setzer (brother of Brian) & The Roostabouts. He toured Europe and the United States with his old blues formation, The Crawling Kingsnake. The dawn of the new millennium saw Napoleon Washington's debut as a solo artist with his renowned steel guitar. As an instrumentalist in a class of his own he earned universal praise with his first album "Hotel Bravo". An extraordinary concert, filmed in 2004, is becoming one of the most original advertising media ever: "The Washington Theater" is a virtual cinema on the Internet, in which anyone can discover the bluesman at work – simply by visiting www.napoleonwashington.com

Ode to the water-lilies. Organic atmospheres, hypnotic moods, intimate ballads – these are all features of the second fantastic album from the band Water Lily, entitled "13th Floor". It is impossible to place the six artists from Valais in one particular style category: they create a universe that hovers back and forth between rock, trip-hop, pop and folk and reveals a particular predilection for psychedelic moods. Gripping melodies, inspired musicians, a vocalist who sings with a voice that fluctuates between crystal clear and strained – all these combine to make Water Lily a first-rate contender for an export hit. Formed on the threshold of the year 2000, the group had already made a good name for themselves on Swiss stages by 2002, when they released their first album "Aphasie". A year later, Water Lily were awarded the "Nouvelles Scènes" prize by the radio station Couleur 3. For their new album, the group secured the services of renowned English producer Teo Miller (Placebo, Robert Plant etc.). "13th Floor" ends with an ethno-psychedelic piece that is carried by a rousing didgeridoo and seeks to invite us on an extraordinary journey. www.waterlily.ch

Best orchestra for funeral music. The Dead Brothers? The name of this quartet from Geneva has certainly caused a few frowns, but there is more than a pinch of irony behind this name. The Dead Brothers have declared themselves the best funeral music orchestra of the century, and as such they blend an enormous number of styles: gipsy music, swing, jazz, rock 'n' roll, folk and country. Their motto is: music should be festive. With a banjo, trombones, trumpet, accordion and guitar, they aim for a universe that comes across as comical and macabre in equal proportions. Their fourth album, "Wunderkammer", displays their musical and linguistic versatility – it is sung in English, French and German. The Dead Brothers have even unearthed an old Marlene Dietrich song ("Wenn ich mir was wünschen dürfte", 1936), which they have adapted in accomplished fashion and combined with a melody by Nino Rota. www.voodooorhythm.com/dead.html

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